

State Representative

Craig R. Fry

The 2000 Session of the Indiana Legislature

Spring, 2000

Dear Friends,

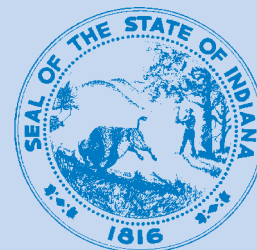
Now that the legislative session has ended for this year, I wanted to take a moment to re-cap much of the legislation that has positively affected the portions of St. Joseph and Elkhart Counties that I have the pleasure of representing in the House of Representatives.

With the tremendous job growth and economic development opportunities created by the expansion of the AM General Plant in our community, I am also pleased to announce that we have passed legislation to increase benefits for workers who have been seriously injured on the job.

As you receive this mailing, the income tax filing deadline is very close. Many Hoosiers will see larger tax refunds from the State of Indiana, thanks to a series of cuts approved by the Legislature in recent sessions. These tax cuts will benefit Hoosiers of all ages and in many different situations. I have voted in favor of tax relief for families, senior citizens, small businesses and even those who rent throughout Mishawaka, Osceola, Elkhart, and South Bend.

I hope you find this newsletter interesting, and I would encourage you to contact me if you have any questions or concerns. I rely on input from my fellow citizens to guide my my voting patterns on your behalf in Indianapolis.

Sincerely,



How To Reach
Representative

Craig R. Fry

DISTRICT

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E-mail updates available on state legislative issues

Several people have indicated to me that they would like to receive e-mail updates on legislative issues and other issues important to our district. I am pleased to offer this service through my legislative office.

Simply e-mail or call my office and I will add you to this list. I am excited about the technological advances over the past few years that allow you nearly instant access to legislative news and information.

Inside this newsletter

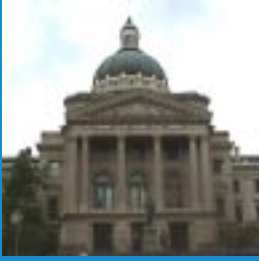


Prescription Drugs for Seniors

Helping Working Families

School Safety

Inventory Tax Cuts



Session News

Helping working men and women

Around 90 percent of Indiana workers who receive a disabling injury in a workplace accident will see their compensation increase close to 50 percent.

There are improvements in the one-time cash payments made to a person who suffers a permanent partial impairment in a workplace accident. The change will help any worker determined to have up to the 30th degree of impairment, which includes around 90 percent of all injured employees. Weekly disability payments also will increase.

Indiana workers who lose their jobs will see unemployment compensation increase by 33 percent over the next three years. The maximum benefit will increase from \$252 to \$336 by July 2002.

To finance the increase, the state will use a larger share of the unemployment trust fund, a move that will cut premium payments by employers by nearly \$80 million over the next two years.

Legislature allocates tobacco funds

Bi-partisan agreement to help children and senior citizens

Certainly one of the biggest achievements of the 2000 legislative session was the passage of legislation that sets up a system to allocate the more than \$4 billion Indiana will be receiving from the national tobacco settlement over the next 25 years. The funds will be used for health care services, tobacco prevention programs and assistance for senior citizens on lower incomes who have trouble purchasing prescription drugs.

The final bill was the result of many months of work by legislators from both political parties. From the start, we have attempted to assure that most of the funding goes to health care and efforts to reduce the use of tobacco products.

In the first year alone, \$35 million will be dedicated toward health care programs, with an emphasis on tobacco education and prevention. Another \$20 million will be used to help seniors on low incomes purchase needed prescription drugs. Community health centers will receive \$15 million in program support, along with a one-time-only appropriation of \$10 million to make physical improvements to facilities.

This is a considerable accomplishment for a short session of the Legislature, and it is a tribute to the willingness of officials to set aside partisan differences in order to pass bills that will have long-term benefits for the people of our state.

Senior citizens will see benefits of tobacco settlement

Senior citizens on lower incomes should not have to choose between buying food to eat or the prescription drugs they need to remain healthy. Thanks to the legislation allocating money from the national tobacco settlement, some won't have to make that decision.

The final bill includes \$20 million to help low income seniors purchase prescription drugs. From my visits around the district, this is one of the most pressing concerns among older Hoosiers. Some people even have been forced to drive as far as Canada to get these drugs at a more affordable rate. I will continue to fight to ensure that seniors get the medications they need at an affordable cost.



Rep. Fry discusses legislation with Governor Frank O'Bannon.

New legislation will track bias crimes

Legislation enabling law enforcement officials to track bias crimes in Indiana was approved by the General Assembly. Officials would be required to report the collected data to the Indiana Central Repository for Criminal History. I was glad to co-author this bill in response to the tragic event in Elkhart last year.

The legislation defines a bias crime as a crime that a person commits based on another person's race, creed, national origin, religion, sexual orientation or disability.

The purpose of this legislation is to use the collected data to assess whether or not a bias crime problem exists in Indiana. Many other states already report bias crimes and use the data for assessment purposes.

Inventory tax cuts greater than expected

\$210 million in savings for taxpayers

Inventory tax cuts enacted by members of the Indiana General Assembly will provide more relief than originally anticipated for small business owners across the state.

When we passed these cuts during the 1999 legislative session, savings were estimated at more than \$80 million in both 2000 and 2001. Now it appears those estimates were low, and the actual savings will be more than \$210 million in both years. This news means that many Hoosiers will see even smaller tax bills in the years ahead.

In the 1999 session, legislators approved a plan that provided a credit for property taxes paid on the first \$12,500 of assessed valuation on personal property, including inventory, mobile homes and farm and manufacturing equipment.

By enacting this credit and assuring it covers both equipment and inventory, we eliminated inventory taxes for nearly 90 percent of the businesses and farms in Indiana. The inventory tax cut is just one part of what is now more than \$1.5 billion in tax relief for the people of Indiana that has been put in place over the past few years.

Other reductions approved during that time provide a new income tax deduction for homeowners that covers up to \$2,500 in property taxes, raise the exemption for dependent children from \$1,000 to \$2,500, increase the renter's deduction from \$1,500 to \$2,000, eliminate the property tax add-back for farmers and small businesses and put two breaks in place that benefit senior citizens: raising the income tax deduction from \$1,000 to \$1,500 and the property tax deduction from \$1,000 to \$2,000.

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nearly 90 percent of the
businesses in Indiana

Medicaid eligibility definition adjusted



Rep. Fry studies legislation at his desk.

Currently, Indiana requires that a person suffer from a life-long disability in order to receive Medicaid Disability assistance. The General Assembly approved legislation that would replace the life-long requirement with a four-year disability requirement.

Indiana has the most restrictive Medicaid Disability definition in the nation. Forty-eight other states require that a person suffer from a disability for one year. New Hampshire is the only other state which requires a four-year disability.

With so many advances in health care, there is a treatment for almost every type of ailment. Medicaid was designed to help needy individuals, but the current system excludes so many from qualifying for the aid that most other states would offer them.

This is not an attempt to provide free health care to all Hoosiers. It simply modifies the restrictions just enough so that a few more deserving individuals are able to qualify.



Session News Organ Donations

Employees at the Bureau of Motor Vehicles will be required to ask whether driver's license applicants wish to make an anatomical gift. Those who choose to do so will have an identifying symbol placed on their licenses.

The Bureau of Motor Vehicles will now have the ability to establish the Anatomical Gift Promotion Fund, which would receive donations for organizations that promote the procurement of organs for anatomical gifts.

School safety

School buses will be required to display the school or school district and its corresponding number on the back and top of the vehicles. This new requirement will make it easier to identify school buses and students in an emergency.

National concern about school safety played a role in passage of legislation that allows school security plans to remain confidential. The legislation also provides that school boards may meet in private to discuss the assessment, design and implementation of school safety and security measures.



Rep. Craig R. Fry

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Call the Statehouse toll-free
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*See inside to add your name
to my e-mail update group*

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State legislative web site

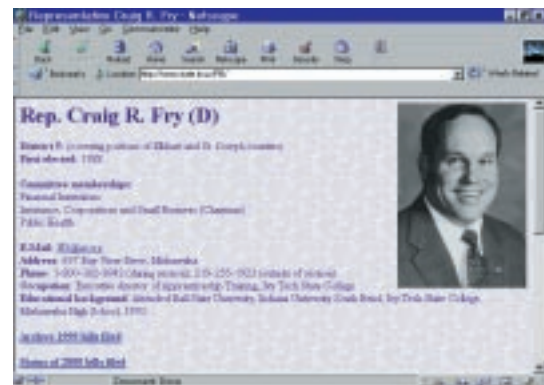
The state web site provides a great deal of information about state government, the legislative process and other related items. The main site at www.state.in.us offers a nice starting point to explore government in Indiana.

From that starting point, you can visit the home pages of elected state officials and state agencies. In addition, several premium services are available for a monthly fee.

I encourage you to visit my web site at www.state.in.us/R5 and explore various items related to the legislature.

A new feature on my web site will allow you to request various House publications. We currently offer publications specifically designed for senior citizens, grade-school children, and high school students in the process of choosing a college. Other publications give a general overview of various Indiana state agencies and advise how to avoid being the victim of a scam. There is also a booklet available which details every bill that became law during this year's legislative session.

You may also request booklets by calling my legislative office at 1-800-382-9842.



A screen shot of my legislative home page

Top Five State Web Sites*

1. State Job Bank
2. Hoosier Lottery Homepage
3. Attorney General's Unclaimed Property Search
4. General Assembly homepage
5. Dept. of Environmental Management homepage

*Based on number of visitors as of February 25, 2000